Settlement of consumers disputes

957. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, which was enacted to settle the consumers disputes expeditiously, has failed in its basic objective;

(b) if so, whether Government have made any efforts to identify the reasons therefor;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (d) No, Sir. It is evident from the fact that out of 18,89,538 cases filed before the consumer disputes redressal agencies, set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, 15,48,050 cases (81.9%) have already been disposed of by them, which is a considerable achievement by any standard.

However, the delay in disposal of cases by the consumer disputes redressal agencies in the country is a cause of concern. The main contributing factors leading to delay are inadequate infrastructure, frequent adjournments, non-filling up of the posts of the Presidents/Members in the consumer disputes redressal agencies etc. To remove these obstacles, some of the important steps taken for the speedy disposal of cases by these agencies are as under:—

(i) One-Time-Grant of Rs. 61.80 crores provided to the States/ UTs by the Central Government to supplement their efforts to strengthen the infrastructure of the consumer disputes redressal agencies;

(ii) Monitoring of the working of consumer disputes redressal agencies through the National Commission;

(iii) States and Union Territories requested to take prompt steps to fill up vacant posts of President/Member in the consumer disputes redressal agencies and maintain a panel of suitable candidates for immediate appointment as President/ Member;

(iv) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 has recently been amended in 2002 mainly to facilitate the quicker disposal of complaints by enhancing the capabilities of the consumer forums, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the procedures and widening the scope of the Act. Among various important amendments made to facilitate quicker disposal of cases include the procedures for selection of the Members of the State Commission and President and Members of the District Forum have been amended for uninterrupted selection of the Members of the State Commission and President and Members of the District Forums so as to fill up vacant post of the State Commission and the District Forums in time. A provision has also been incorporated in the amendment to empower the senior most Member to perform as President in the absence of the regular President of the National Commission, State Commission and the District Forum for smooth and uninterrupted functioning of these forums.

Prices of essential commodities

†958. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of the commodities of daily consumption food materials such as flour, pulses, edible oils, vegetables, milk etc. have been on the constant increase for the past few years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.